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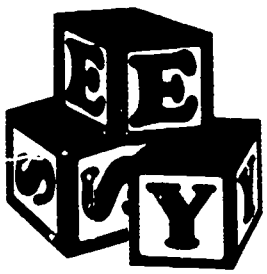
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to examine program implementation and effects during the first 2 years of Winnipeg, Manitoba's Early School Years Project. The project included components on early childhood classrooms, home learning, parents, and parent/child centers. It was designed to provide educational enrichment to the parents and nursery and kindergarten children of families in the downtown core area of Winnipeg. To ascertain how well these goals were accomplished, data were gathered from a number of sources, including staff interviews, student testing, and student records. Findings are summarized in sections on processes and effects. The section on processes discusses the level of project implementation and compares the project classrooms to control classrooms. The section on effects examines the impact of the project on students and their parents. It is concluded that the Early School Years Project is a comprehensive educational program that addresses language development in the early years, and brings about meaningful involvement of parents in their children's learning. In addition, the program has demonstrated an innovative approach to the involvement of parents in the learning process; a framework that emphasizes the importance of planning in implementation, training, and research design; and the need to build a strong and meaningful partnership with parents. (RH)



Early School Years

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Childhood Intervention in the Inner City

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Acknowledgement: The writers of this paper would like to acknowledge the contributions of Erma Chapman-Smyth in the compilation of the evaluation data on Parent Involvement included in this paper. Ms. Chapman-Smyth is the Director of Research and Planning, Knowles Centre Inc., 2065 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

THE EARLY SCHOOL YEARS PROJECT:

Early Childhood Intervention in the Inner City

EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Recent research on early childhood intervention indicates that these programs have both short and long-term positive effects on low-income children. Children who have attended preschool programs have made intellectual and cognitive gains which have persisted beyond the early primary grades (Schweinhart & Weikhart, 1980; Wright, 1983). These children were less likely to be placed in special education classes or repeat a grade (Schweinhart & Weikhart, 1980; Wright, 1983), or exhibit certain delinquent behaviours (Farnworth, Schweinhart & Berrueta-Clement, 1985), and were more likely to be at grade level (Lazur & Darlington, 1983) than were disadvantaged children who received no early intervention.

Three factors have been identified which are related to the success of compensatory preschool programs: quality of the program, parental involvement, and age or grade at which the program is begun. Researchers have found that program effectiveness is more dependent on the overall quality of the program operation than on a specific curriculum (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, & Weikhart, 1984; Wright, 1983). In his review of the literature, Bronfenbrenner (1974) pointed out that parental involvement in compensatory preschool programs was essential in order for the program to be successful. Parents can be taught the skills to continue the education of the child in the home and to reinforce the learning which is provided by the program. Age or grade at which the programs are started is another important factor. Researchers have agreed that the earlier the programs are started the better (Carter, 1984; Meyer, 1984). The more skills a child can bring to his/her first experience in school, the better that child will perform later on. Thus, if high quality early intervention programs (preschool, nursery, or kindergarten) with parental involvement are offered, the probability that the child will perform better in his/her later school years increases.

BACKGROUND

In January 1984, the Education Development Program of the Core Area Initiative began receiving proposals from Winnipeg No. 1 schools for language intervention programs at the preschool, nursery, and kindergarten levels, and for parental involvement programs. Individually, the proposals lacked scope, but when combined they formed a comprehensive intervention program. What developed was the Early School Years project, funded jointly by the Winnipeg School Division, the provincial education department (Manitoba Education), and the Education Development Program of

the Core Area Initiative. The Core Area Initiative is an organization which was formed to revitalize the downtown core area of Winnipeg, and it receives funding from the federal, provincial and municipal government.

The Early School Years (ESY) project is a three year pilot program in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. The project began operation in September, 1985, in three inner city schools, and is designed for nursery and kindergarten children and their families. Schools in the inner city are characterized as having low income families, high unemployment rates, a high number of single parent families and high numbers of families with English as a second language.

The Early School Years project focuses on children in the preschool and early school years, but has implications for all school staff. It is anticipated that the children involved in the project will go on in their schooling with increased language abilities, and as a result, may have the readiness skills needed to progress through school programs with fewer problems. It has been shown that facility with language, generally acquired before entering grade one, is significantly related to success in later years.

Educators are cognizant of the important learning that occurs in young children during parental interactions at home. However, for parents in the inner city, social and economic factors may take precedence over parent/child interactions. It is essential for compensatory preschool programs to provide support for families to become more involved in the educational process of their children. The Early School Years project provides these supports through contact with home visitors, parent programs, and parent/child resource centres. It is hoped that parents will continue their involvement in the child's learning process after the child has left the program. Research has shown that without family involvement, early intervention programs are likely to be unsuccessful and what few effects are achieved tend to disappear once the intervention program is discontinued (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

There are four interrelated components in the Early School Years project designated to provide students with an enriched educational environment. These four components include: (a) the Early Childhood classroom, (b) the Home Learning program, (c) the Parent program, and (d) the Parent/Child Centres.

The overall responsibility of the operation and development of the four ESY components is with the Project Management Team. Members of the management team are: (a) a representative of the Superintendent's Department, (b) the three project school principals, (c) the Project Manager, (d) the Early Childhood Co-ordinator, and (e) a Core Area Initiative/Manitoba Education

representative. The Management team's goals and objectives are:

1. To develop an effective management team process which will provide for an effective implementation of the Early School Years Project.

2. To develop a communications system among the four components of the program. These components include the classroom settings, a home learning program, parenting programs, and the parent/child centres.

3. To develop a communications system between the Early School Years Project and the communities in which the project has been established.

Monthly meetings are held to formulate project directions and respond to issues affecting the overall development of the project.

Under direction and guidance of the management team, the Project Manager is responsible for: (1) organizing, co-ordinating and monitoring the pilot project in the three school communities; (2) assessing and responding to needs related to the project; (3) providing support and training to the project staff; (4) reviewing and recommending educational materials and programs relevant to the project; (5) acting as a liaison with outside groups; (6) facilitating communications among the pilot schools; (7) administering the project budget; (8) assisting in the recruitment and supervision of project staff; and (9) facilitating the process of evaluation of the project.

CLASSROOM COMPONENT

The project operates in three inner city schools. Each site has a school team consisting of the classroom teacher, called the Lead Teacher, who is responsible for co-ordinating the program and two other staff members, the Language Development Aide and the Home Visitor.

Description of Lead Teacher Role

The lead teachers are a very important part of the E.S.Y. classroom. They are responsible for developing the early childhood program, so their commitment to the project and willingness to assume the additional responsibilities of the project are crucial to the program's success. The teachers direct the staff on a day to day basis, delegate responsibilities, and direct the development of the Early School Years team at their project school. They also help to determine the training needs of the E.S.Y. staff, and provide in-class and out-of-class training through program planning with individual staff.

Classroom Program and Description of the Language Development Aide

The classroom component focuses on providing an enriched classroom environment and an intensified language development program. In order to assist the classroom teacher, language development aides were hired to promote the use of language. Since aides normally receive only "on the job" training, the addition of aides specifically trained in the philosophy of early childhood education and language development, adds a new dimension to the classroom. Under the direction of the Lead Teacher, the Language Development Aides are involved in all aspects of the classroom program with a specific focus on language development. They work with small groups and with individual children in activities prepared in co-operation with the Lead Teachers. They also work with children in various activity areas of the classroom to help extend the children's language and serve as a role model in the use of language. The additional amount of adult/child interaction for the student allows the teacher to increase the learning activities within the classroom program. The specific goals of the classroom component are as follows:

1. To enhance: receptive language skills
   expressive language skills
   problem solving skills

2. To enhance students' social/emotional development in the following areas:

   a. Self-concept
   b. Classroom behavior
   c. Child-child interaction
   d. Child-adult interaction
   e. Attitudes toward school and learning

3. To provide an <u>enriched</u> activity based environment by providing:

   a. Training for aides and teachers
   b. Increased individualized interactions with students
   c. Frequent observations of students' language
   d. Detailed record keeping

4. To develop an Early School Years team approach and provide leadership in the school and community.

Training Program

The training program for the Early School Years project staff is developed on an ongoing basis in response to the needs identified by the staff. The Language Development Aides attend half day or full day training sessions during the school day and are therefore absent from the classroom. During their training, the classroom operates without the presence of the Language Development Aide or a substitute aide. Some of the training areas in the first two years included: early childhood philosophy, language development, multicultural awareness, child development, techniques on recording and observation and classroom management. The training program and guidance by the teacher prepares the Language Development Aides to assist the teachers in record-keeping, child observations, Early Identification Program checklists, material preparation and implementation of classroom activities. The Language Development Aide training involved an intensive first year, including 16 days of inservices and workshops. During the second year 8 training sessions were attended and to date in the third year of the project 6 training sessions have been organized.

Home Learning Component

The home learning program establishes the link between the home and school by providing support and resources for parents to use with their children. The role of the home learning assistant is to work with both students and parents to provide opportunities to enhance language development at home. The link between home and school is expected to reinforce educational goals established in the classroom, and to help parents become more confident in their role as teacher. Specifically the goals of the home learning component are:

In co-operation with the Early School Years Project staff:

1. Develop strategies and activities consistent with the Early School Years Project classroom program, which can be used by parents within the home setting.

2. a) Establish contact with parent(s) in their home.
   b) Develop a working relationship with parent(s) and their child(ren).

3. Collect, make, purchase and/or borrow materials which can be taken into homes for use by parents.

4. Informally provide parent(s) with information concerning child development processes and to reinforce the idea that the parent(s) plays an important role in the education of the child.

5. To assist parent(s) in gaining self-confidence in their roles as parents and teachers.

6. To act as a catalyst in parent/child learning situations.

7. To provide information and encourage the use of community resources (e.g., libraries, parent-child centres, etc.)

The Home Visitor is responsible for delivering the program into the child's home. All the homes of the Kindergarten and Nursery children in the program are visited. It is necessary for parents to understand the program is not a remediation program, but rather an early intervention program available to all families in the designated pilot classrooms. The home visit is done in an informal way emphasizing that children learn through play and play experiences. The visit includes all adults and children that are present in the home at the time of the visit. The home becomes the teaching environment, therefore household articles, daily experiences, books, teacher-made games and activities are used as teaching tools.

A home visit ranges from thirty minutes to one hour in length. The home visitor models adult/child interaction encouraging parents to participate. This allows parents to see the type of activities the children do at school; they can observe their children's capabilities and can discuss what their children are learning. Activities and books are left in the home on loan for one month loan period. The home visitor emphasizes the child's successes and achievements, and reinforces the parents in their role as the child's first teacher through encouragement and support.

Program Planning

Under the direction of the lead teacher and in co-operation with the Project Manager, each school site manages its program through regular meetings scheduled for specific purposes. Each pilot school has developed an in-school Early School Years team. The composition of the team varies at each school. For example, team members may include Early School Years staff and Support Staff, Parent/Child Centre Staff, Principal and Vice-Principal, Parent Resources Assistant and regular classroom aide. These meetings occur during the noon hour in order to share information and plan for the ongoing development of the project. Monthly meetings occur between project staff to develop specific themes and activities to be implemented in the classroom, to share ideas, to provide follow-up to the training, to identify parent interests and needs, and to develop resources for the classroom, children and parents.

The model developed for establishing a consistent process of communication proved essential for the planning and implementation of the project. The development of the project remained consistent among all three schools as a direct result of organizing a system of regular meetings with staff members, planning the program as a team, and open communication with the Project Manager within the school team and between all project schools.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent's involvement and participation in the learning process of their child/ren have been fostered throughout the component of the Early School Years Project. The resources and practices of all involved in the project have highlighted the need to have parents as partners in the learning process of children. The project has allowed parents and teachers to work together in a concerted and co-ordinated way to establish positive learning environments and attitudes so that children at a very young age receive an enriched language program.

In January 1984, discussion began between parents, residents, school personnel and representatives of local social service agencies in the core area of the city. These discussions led to a project proposal being drawn up and submitted to the Core Area Initiative, Education Development Program in the Spring of 1984. In the Spring of 1985, the Early School Years Project was established - jointly funded by the Core Area Initiative, the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and Manitoba Education.

Parent/Child Centres were an integral part of the Early School Years Project, but they retained their integrity as separate programs providing resources to parents and pre-school children.

The funding for the Parent/Child Centres was a co-operative arrangement between the Core Area Initiative, the Federal Government (Canada Works Program) and Child and Family Services.

The Parent/Child Centres were established in the fall of 1985. The initial three centres - at Ellice, Elgin and Strathcona - were set up in very different settings, a storefront operation; one adjacent to Central Child and Family Services' offices; and the third centre was located in a project school. Over the past year, two additional centres opened in the inner city. Though all five centres share the same basic goals and program components, each centre is distinct and separate, and their programming reflects the needs of each local community.

The five centres are currently co-ordinated by the Parent/Child Centre Co-ordinating Committee. This Committee was set up to provide initial organizing support, provide direction to the centres, hire centre staff and co-ordinate services until the centres could function independently, with their own community boards. The Committee is composed of representatives from the

Core Area Initiative, Early School Years Project, Child and Family Services Central and the Centre Co-ordinators. Parents from the centres have been encouraged to participate in the various subcommittees.

Parent/Child Centres are drop-in centres for parents and pre-school children. Each centre is unique, yet four components are common to all.

They all feature:

1) a drop-in play area;
2) a toy and book lending library;
3) a parent resource centre;
4) parent initiated workshops and special events.

The centres are preventative in nature. They are informally structured and create a warm non-threatening environment that encourages parental input and involvement in all aspects of the program.

The overall purpose of the Parent/Child Centres is to strengthen, support and provide needed resources to parents of preschool children so that they can ensure the overall development of their children during the first five years of life.

All the centres are located in Winnipeg's inner city. Each is surrounded by a unique community with its own specific needs. To ensure these needs are met, the parent users help to determine the day-to-day programming at each centre. Though programs vary from centre to centre, all strive to achieve the same basic goals. These goals are as follows:

1) to enhance healthy relationships between parents and their pre-school children;

2) to provide positive play opportunities for pre-school children in their neighbourhood;

3) to facilitate the development of parental initiative, involvement and ownership in all aspects of the centre's operation;

4) to facilitate the development of support networks for parents in the community;

5) to develop and maintain professional relationships with community resources, consultants, employers, and co-workers.

A Parent Resource Assistant staff position is also in place to assist in the development of parent involvement and education programs at schools in Winnipeg's inner city.

The prime objectives of this staff position are as follows:

1) provide assistance to the Early School Years Project schools in all aspects related to the delivery of parent programs;

2) assist all Parent/Child Centre co-ordinators and parents in the development of proposals for funding, and in the development of parent/community boards; and,

3) to assist Inner City schools in the delivery of parent programs.

The Parent Resource Assistant works in co-operation with parents and schools to identify local school-community parenting needs and interests, provide appropriate programs, and assists parents in becoming more skilled as educators of their children.

SUMMARY OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Educators have focused on parent involvement in schools for low-income parents for the last two decades. Middle and upper class parents have a history of involvement and participation in schools whereas less-advantaged parents have been unwilling or unable to become involved in traditional ways (McLaughlin M.W. and Shields, P.M. (1987). The challenge for educators in inner city schools is to overcome these obstacles. This can come about only if schools believe that low-income parents have contributions to make and provide the resources necessary to facilitate parental involvement.

The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has demonstrated a willingness to involve less-advantaged parents in the education of their preschool children by developing two distinct parental involvement components in the Early School Years project, that is, the Parent/Child Centres and the Parent Resource Assistant.

The objectives of the Parent/Child Centres are to strengthen, support and provide needed resources to parents of preschool children so they can ensure the overall development of their children during the first five years of life.

The development of Parent/Child Centres and a Parent Co-ordinator position are based on the belief that less-advantaged parents have valuable contributions to make in the education of their children. The success of the Early School Years is due, in part, to the funding of these creative initiatives to involve parents in the education of their preschool children. All the components of the Early School Years project function in concert to provide preschool children and their families with an enriched preschool experience.

METHOD

Procedure

The purpose of this report was to examine the level of implementation during the first two years of the Early School Years project, and the effects of the program on the children and their parents. Data were gathered from a number of sources to accomplish these goals.

The E.S.Y. project staff were interviewed individually, they completed questionnaires, and took part in a focus group. Parents of the children currently in the project and parents of children who had been through the project were interviewed individually. The teachers who received project children into their classrooms were interviewed, and staff at project schools were surveyed. The nursery and kindergarten classroom staff at the control schools also completed a questionnaire.

Three types of student outcome data were collected: academic self-esteem as measured by the Behavioral Academic Self-Esteem rating scale (BASE), language skills as measured by the Test of Language Development - Primary (TOLD-P), and student background information.

The BASE is a teacher rating scale consisting of 16 items which can be used for preschool, elementary and junior high school students (Coopersmith & Gilbert, 1982). Classroom teachers take approximately five minutes to rate each student on the 16 behavioral items according to whether the student (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) usually, or (5) always acts in the manner described by the item. Inter rater reliability between teachers has been estimated at 0.71 (Coopersmith & Gilbert, 1982).

The TOLD-P was designed to determine children's specific strengths and weaknesses in language skills. Five of the seven subscales were used in the study: picture vocabulary, oral vocabulary, grammatic understanding, sentence imitation, and grammatic completion. The last two subscales, word discrimination and word articulation, were not used because of the high percentage of children from non-English speaking families. It was felt that those two subscales would not provide a true measure of performance of those children.

The student background data included information on: (1) school enrolled in; (2) date enrolled; (3) length of time in the program; (4) month by month attendance; (5) grade level; (6) age; (7) gender; (8) language(s) spoken in home; (9) family status (i.e., two parents, single parent, grandparents, etc.); (10) employment status; and (11) birth order.

The student data were collected in the following manner:

Year I (1985/86) - Student background information and BASE were recorded in October and May for students in project and comparison schools. As well, the TOLD-P test was administered to students during both recording periods.

Year II (1986/87) - In the second year there were two cohorts of students: Cohort 1 included children who had been in the E.S.Y. project during the first year, Cohort 2 included new children entering the program for the first time. For students in Cohort 1, background information was collected in both October and May, while BASE and TOLD-P were measured only in May. All data on the new students in Cohort 2 were collected in October and May (i.e., background data, BASE, and TOLD-P).

Research Design

The research design of the Early School Years project included five schools: the three project schools (Schools P1, P1, P3) and two additional schools (Schools C1, C2) used as control schools. All five schools were categorized as having low income families, high unemployment rates, high numbers of English as second language families, parents with low education levels, high transiency, and a high number of single parent families.

The project classrooms in the three Early School Years schools were regular nursery and/or kindergarten classes. One project school (P1) had two nursery classes as the project classrooms. Another school (P2) had one nursery class and one kindergarten class, while the third school (P3) had two kindergarten classes as the project classrooms. One comparison school (School C1) had none of the components of the Early School Years Project.

Students from two regular nursery and two regular kindergarten classrooms were used. The program at School C2 involved the placement of language development aides in the regular nursery and kindergarten classroom. The training received by these aides was similar to, but not as comprehensive, as the training received by the aides in the three Early School Years schools. This school did not have a parent or home visiting program, nor a parent/child centre.

RESULTS

A great deal of data were collected during the first two years of the E.S.Y. project (i.e., the 1985-86 and 1986-87 school terms), and continue to be collected this year. Rather than going into detail about the numerous findings, the results will be summarized into two main sections on processes and effects of the program.

Processes

This section examines and discusses the level of implementation of the project, and compares the project classrooms to the control classrooms.

Level of Implementation

Project staff roles. The results of E.S.Y. staff interviews and questionnaires indicate that the lead teacher, the language development aide, and the home visitor are recognized as the core of the Early School Year program, with supports from the project manager, parent resource assistant and parent/child centres. The roles of the lead teacher, language aide, and home visitor were perceived to be clearly defined and all staff articulated each role clearly.

Focus groups. Focus group questions were developed to address concerns and questions which were raised during interviews with staff and parents, and to assess the manner in which each team functioned. Results of responses to focus group questions are outlined in Table 1. As can be seen from the table, needs of children and families in the community which they serve are defined and addressed differently by each team, within the overall structure of the Early School Years Project. Barriers to delivering the program at each school are different, and, therefore, must be addressed differently. At School A, the number of families from a variety of non-English speaking cultures presents a major barrier to children's English language development and parent involvement. In contrast, at School C, the impact of poverty and its attendant factors (e.g., transiency, too many agencies involved with each family) are found in children's articulation difficulties in language development and lack of parent involvement in the educational system.

The results of the focus groups discussions emphasized that each of the project schools is addressing the language development needs of children and encouraging parent involvement in their child's education within the philosophical and conceptual framework of the Early School Years Project. However, because the needs of the children and families at each school are different (See Table 1), three unique methods of delivery of the Early School Years program have developed.

Goals and objectives. Goal attainment scaling was employed in order to measure the degree to which the E.S.Y. project was meeting process goals which had been established during the original development of the project. Ranking of outcomes for each project school is indicated on Table 2 by an asterisk. As can be seen in the table, none of the school teams was performing at a level less than the "expected outcome" for any of scales.

The minimum outcomes achieved by each program were as follows:

1. Goals and direction of the program are defined and could be articulated by each team member;

2. A two-way communication mechanism was established, and was used regularly by the school and was used sporadically by the community;

3. Individual student needs were recognized and addressed within the context of the class program;

4. An attempt was made to establish a working relationship (six in-person meetings) between the team and each parent; and,

5. Parent programs were developed based on needs as perceived by team members.

Parent awareness. Parents of 18 children who were new to the E.S.Y. program in the 1986-87 school year were interviewed in September, 1986. The parents generally reported positive feelings toward the school in which their child was enrolled. A range of involvement with the school was found among the respondents, which is likely representative of the total population of parents in the E.S.Y. project, indicating that most parents were prepared to become involved. At least half of the people interviewed knew about the E.S.Y. project and the Parent/Child Centre at their child's school. All respondents had met the classroom teacher and many had also met the language development aide and/or the school principal. A majority of parents in the sample planning to attend a parent program and over a third of the parents had already received a home visit.

Comparison of Classrooms

At the end of the second year, staff from both project and control schools were surveyed. The purpose of this survey was to determine if there were differences between the classrooms in project and control schools. Staff indicated how much time they actually spent, and indicated how much time they would ideally allocate to each of six types of interactions (See Table 3 for a list of the six types). They also reported the kinds of activities they engaged during these different types of interactions. Finally, staff indicated which staff members were involved in a number of classroom-related tasks or activities.

Because of the focus of the E.S.Y. classrooms, it was expected that there would be differences between project and control staff in the amount time they spent in various kinds of interactions with children, and differences in the types of activities they engaged in during those interactions. It was also anticipated that different staff in project and control classrooms might be involved in certain activities (i.e., which staff

members read to children in small groups - teacher, language aide, or regular aide?).

The results indicated significant differences in a number of areas. There were differences in how staff allocated their time to various types of interactions. As is evident in Table 3, project staff reported that they allotted a greater percentage of their time to small group interactions than did control staff. Whereas, control staff reported that they actually allotted and would ideally allocate more time to whole class interactions than project staff. This difference may be a reflection of the actual classroom situation in control schools rather than a different philosophical approach. Twenty percent of the comparison staff felt that large classes contributed to difficulties with classroom related duties, whereas, only 6% of project staff felt this way.

All respondents listed the kinds of activities they did during the six staff/student interactions discussed above. These are outlined in Table 4 for project and control classrooms. It is clear from Table 4 that there were many similarities between activities in project and comparison classrooms. The differences, indicated in capital letters and with an asterisk, were of two types. One was that some kinds of activities were only mentioned in project or comparison classrooms but not both; and two, similar activities/tasks appeared in different types of interactions.

For example, settling disputes/discipline was mentioned only in control classrooms, occurring during individual interactions with children and small group interactions. Project staff reported that centre-play and drama were activities that occurred during small group interactions, whereas, control staff did not mention either of these activities.

In project schools, story telling and writing were carried out in small group interactions or with individual children, while in control schools, story telling and writing were done in whole class interactions. As well, preparing snacks and classroom clean-up were listed by both project and comparison staff. In project classrooms snack preparation was done during small group interactions, and classroom clean up was part of whole class activities, while in control classrooms both were done while staff were working along.

There were also differences between the two classrooms in which staff were reported to be involved in classroom-related activities. Looking first at differences between the classroom teachers from project and control schools, the project teachers were perceived to be more involved in reading to small groups of children, assisting with the computer, and performing individual language interventions than were teachers from the control schools.

In project classrooms the language development aides were involved to a much greater degree than regular aides from control schools in activities related to language, assessment, and preparation and selection of instructional materials. For example, in the project schools 90% of the staff perceived that the language aide was involved in selecting instructional material under the direction of the teacher, whereas, only 15% felt that the regular classroom aides were involved in this activity in control schools. Thus, the language development aides were knowledgeable enough to assist with selecting instructional materials to a greater degree than regular untrained aides. The differences in involvement between language development aides and regular aides in control schools were most apparent in areas that language aides had received training.

To summarize the process results, the classroom component has been successfully implemented. A team approach was developed in the project classrooms, and the roles of members of the team were clearly defined. All parents interviewed were aware of the project, and had received at least one home visit. There were significant differences between project and control schools in how the staff allocated their time, the types of activities engaged in by the staff during student-teacher interactions, and which staff were involved in certain activities. The difference arose in areas which had received specific emphasis in the Early School Years project. That is, in project classrooms the children were provided more opportunities to interact with adults, there was a greater emphasis on language, and there was the trained language aide who was a valuable resource to the classroom lead teacher. Preliminary results from classroom observations conducted in project and control classes corroborate these findings.

Outcome Results

This section examined the impact of the E.S.Y. project on students and their parents. The results for students are presented first, followed by the findings of the effects on the parents.

Student Outcomes

Two standardized testing instruments, the Behavioral Academic Self-Esteem (BASE) rating scale, and the Test of Language Development (TOLD), were used to measure students' academic self-esteem and language skills, respectively.

There were two different groups or cohorts of students. Cohort 1 was the group of 309 students who started the program during the 1985-86 school year, the first year of the project. Students in Cohort 1 were tested three times: in October 1985, May 1986 and in May 1987. This group was not tested in October 1986, because it was assumed that students performance in October would be very similar to their performance in the previous May.

Cohort 2 was the group of 228 students who began the program during the second year of the project, i.e. the 1986-87 school year. These students were tested twice: first in October 1986, and again in May 1987.

RATIONALE FOR ANALYSES

Both the project and control groups for cohorts one and two were composed of intact classes of children. None of the children was randomly assigned to the class, so there was some concern about the internal validity of the data. Because it was anticipated that there were differences among the schools on certain background characteristics, multiple regression analyses were used to control for the potential influence of the following variables: family status (single parent, two parent family), parents' employment status (0, 1, or 2 parents working), language(s) spoken at home (no English, English only, English plus other language(s)), and age of the child. Tables 5 and 6 detail background characteristics for each school for cohorts one and two, respectively.

Stepwise multiple regression was used, forcing the background characteristics into the equation first, then allowing the group variable (project, control) to enter. Data were analyzed separately for each cohort.

Self-esteem. Table 7 presents the results of the multiple regression analyses for cohort one BASE data. The first part of the table presents the results for the first testing period - October, 1985. There were significant differences between the initial self-esteem scores for project and control subjects, with control students having higher scores; $F(1,255) = 10.49$, $p < .001$. The age of the student and their parents' employment status were also related to their self-esteem. Older children and children who had one or more working parent had higher self-esteem. By the second testing period, Spring 1986, the students from project schools had higher self-esteem than control students. After the fall BASE score and background characteristics had been controlled, there was a significant difference between the project and control groups. This difference was not large, explaining only two percent of the variance. The best predictors of students' Spring BASE score were their Fall BASE score, their age, and being from a project school.

As can be seen in Table 7, at the follow-up testing one year later (Spring 1987), the difference in self-esteem between project and control students was marginal, but the tendency was for higher scores for project students. The group variable was only accounting for one percent of the variance; $F(7,145) = 2.76$, $p < .10$. To summarize the effects of the project on cohort one students' self-esteem, control students started out with higher esteem scores at the beginning of the project. By the end of the first year (Spring 1986) the esteem of the project students was higher than that of the control students.

This trend continued at follow-up one year later, but the difference between project and control students' self-esteem scores was small.

Table 8 presents the results of the multiple regression analyses for cohort two. As with cohort one, the control students started out with higher self-esteem scores in the fall than the project students; $F(1,212) = 6.49$, $p < .012$. However, after spending the school term in the project classrooms, the project students had higher self-esteem scores than did the control students; $F(1,173) = 22.98$, $p < .000$. In the Spring, the best predictors of children's self-esteem scores were their Fall BASE scores, being in a project classroom, and their age.

Results from both cohorts of children indicate that the Early School Years project did have a positive impact on the children's self-esteem as measured by the BASE. There was a trend for this positive impact to persist into the next school year, but the effects were not as great. It should be noted that the differences between project and control students were greater for cohort two students. This group of students entered the program after the project had been underway for one year, and staff had received a year of training. Cohort one students were involved in the project during the implementation period. Thus, it might be expected that the cohort two students would display more gains than cohort one students. Both cohort one and two students will be followed up with testing this Spring (May 1988).

Language skills. There were no significant effects of the E.S.Y. project on cohort one students' language skills as measured by the TOLD-P. However, there were some significant findings for cohort two students and these are detailed in Table 9. The language skills of the project and control children were at approximately the same level in October 1986 when they entered school; $F(1,196) = 1.86$, $p < .175$. By the second testing period in May 1987 the language skills of the project students were significantly higher than the control students; $F(1,157) = 22.88$, $p < .000$. The best predictors of students' Spring TOLD-P scores were their fall scores, being in a project classroom, and their age.

Impact on Parents

To determine a longer-term impact of the Early School Years Project, 12 parents of students enrolled in the program during the 1985-86 school year were interviewed in person during early January 1987. Names of parents were drawn randomly from a list of parents whose child:

- was no longer participating in the program;
- was still attending school at the project site; and,
- had attended the program for at least half of the previous school year.

All of the parents who were interviewed expressed positive feelings about their child's school, and none of the parents perceived any drawbacks to the E.S.Y. project. In terms of their involvement with the school, one parent indicated he/she had "very little" while two parents indicated that their level of involvement was limited due to work commitments. The rest of the parents discussed some degree of involvement. The parents were also asked to describe how they expected to be involved in their child's education. Responses included:

- keep in touch with the teacher or principal (5 parents);
- practice specific subjects with child (5 parents);
- attend parent teacher interviews (4 parents);
- volunteer to assist teacher (3 parents);
- show interest in child's work (2 parents);
- help child learn to be polite (1 parent); and,
- read to child (1 parent).

These parents reported greater levels of involvement with the school and/or their child's education than did the parents of children who were just starting the project in 1986-87. Moreover, parents in this 1985-86 follow-up sample had a more definite idea of the manner in which they could assist with their child's education.

All of the parents who were interviewed had received home visits from the home learning assistant the previous year, and many of the parents continued to make use of skills learned from her. Fewer of the parents had attended parent programs, but those who had attended found them to be enjoyable.

Teachers of the children who had gone through the Early School Years project noted that the parents' involvement with the school had improved compared to other classes they had had. For example, the numbers of parents present on Meet-the-Teacher night was greater; there was increased demand on teachers to interact with parents; parents did not hesitate to approach the teacher to ask questions; parents were volunteering to help without being asked; and more parents seem to be reading with children at home.

As one of the components of the Early School Years Project, the Parent/Child Centres had had an impact on the parents as well. Comments by the parents show that the centres offer them an informal place for them to gather and feel comfortable in the schools. Listed below are excerpts from letters two parents sent to the Board of Trustees:

A single parent with three children writes:

> "I feel the centre is a place for me (when I need to talk to someone) and for my children. We have made many new friends and feel more involved and welcome at the school. I think the centre has given my child a real head start for

school... When I do something well with her I feel great. When I need advice or new ideas I can get them from the people at the centre."

One woman, a mother and grandmother, was drawn to the centre in order to make friends. She describes the process of becoming an active participant in the school:

"At first, I played with the little ones and talked to the young moms, now I'm also a volunteer in the school. The older students read to me and I often bake bannock with them. I use things I've learned at the centre with my own grandchildren - like the importance of reading to them."

Summary of Outcome Results

To summarize the outcome results, the Early School Years project has had a positive effect on students and their parents. All students (i.e., students from control and project schools) demonstrated academic progress, but the children from the E.S.Y. classrooms showed greater improvement in their self-esteem and their language development than the children from the control schools. For children from the first group or cohort the greatest gains were evident while the children were still in the E.S.Y. classrooms. However, when tested one year later the scores of project children were still marginally higher than the scores of control students.

The effects of the project were more consistent for the second cohort of students. At the end of the school year, children from project schools demonstrated greater self-esteem and language skills than the children from control schools. It had been anticipated that the effects of the project would be more prominent after the first year of the program. This was because during the first year the implementation of the program was ongoing, the staff were receiving their training, and parents were becoming aware of E.S.Y. project. For cohort two, the program had been successfully implemented, staff had received the major portion of their training, and staff were more familiar with their roles in the project when the children started school in the fall. Thus, cohort two children received the full benefit of the program from the beginning of the school year.

The impact of the project on the parents has been positive, as well. Over the first two years parents of children at E.S.Y. schools have become more involved in the school and with their children's education, and have learned skills that they continue to use with all their children. Parents became involved in a number of different ways. These included: volunteering in the school, attending programs at the schools, working and reading with their children, contacting teachers and home visitors, or visiting the Parent/Child Centres.

CONCLUSION

The Early School Years Project is a comprehensive educational program that addresses the issues of language development in the early years, as well as meaningful involvement of parents in the learning process of their children. The results of this program strongly support the existing research and literature in the field of early childhood education and parent involvement.

This program has demonstrated an innovative approach to the involvement of parents in the learning process, and a framework that emphasizes the importance of planning in the implementation of programs, training of all staff involved in the program, a research design that has supported the growth of the program, and the need to build a strong meaningful partnership with parents.

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Table 1
Focus Group Responses

School Team Members	Primary Needs of Children & Families	How Addressing These Needs	What are Barriers	How Addressing Barriers
School A Lead Teacher Language Developmer Aide Home Visitor	1. Help parents to see that they have a role in child's education. 2. Parents learn play concept in the home 3. Help children and parents learn English while reinforcing the value of own language.	1. Translate materials and articles use ethnic aides; use 6 or 7 approaches to each home 2. Changed format of parent-teacher interviews to encourage questions 3. Connect parents to one another in the community 4. ESL classes for mothers	1. Formality of culture 2. Language 3. Working schedules of parents 4 School building looks formidable 5. No space in school to talk privately	1. Time and effort to learn about different cultures. 2. Newsletter, translators, visibility. 3. Building acceptance of different cultures within within the classroom. 4. Spend time in homes, workplaces, and community.
School B Lead Teacher Language Development Aide Home Visitor Coordinator of Parent/Child Centre	1. Language skills. 2. Social development 3. Enriched environment 4. Parent involvement	1. Have learned from materials home visitor takes into home. 2. Parents reinforced for what they have been doing 3. Use activity-based program in classroom 4. Parent/child centre included as part of program	1. Different time schedules. 2. Reality of teaching time 3. Language 4. Education levels of parents 5. Home visitor position isolated	1. Offer programs, home visits in the evening. 2. Translate materials & use effective translators. 3. Make experience in classroom positive for child. 4. Kids teach each other language. 5. Safe non-judgemental environment.
School C Lead Teacher Language Development Aide Home Visitor Parent Resource Assistant	1. Language development a priority 2. Build self image and confidence in kids 3. Build contact between families and school, community and other families	1. Emphasize language all the time 2. Work together all the time, activities encourage cooperation positive discipline, teacher has time for each child. 3. Home visitor makes contact and bridges gaps; parent resource assistant encourages parents to meet one another in programs at	1. Basic needs (food, clothes, shelter). 2. Transiency 3. Too many agencies involved with families home visitor just one more 4. Resistant parents 5. Articulation errors difficulties in children's language.	1. Try to meet basic needs (full school support). 2. Keep trying to meet parents. 3. Home visitor keeps meeting centred on child; very low key to build trust. 4. Offer parent "workshops" on drop-in basis with whole family involved. 5. Language development aide assess and address.

Table 2

Early School Years Evaluation

School: _____ Date: January 13, 1987

Goals

Outcomes	Implement Early School Years Program	Communication Established Between School and Community	Direct Language Interaction	Working Relationship Established Between Home and School	Parent Skills are Developed
most unfavourable outcome likely	people hired; no defined program goals or direction	no communication mechanism established	no programs developed	direct contacts between the team and home were not attempted	needs of parents are not identified; programs may or may not be offered
less than expected outcome	lead teacher has defined and can articulate program goals and direction	communication mechanism established and used sporadically by school or community	programs developed to enhance 1 or 2 of receptive language, expressive language or problem solving	direct contacts between a team member and some parents have been attempted	team members identify needs of parents; programs do not address these needs
expected outcome	goals and direction of the program are defined and can be articulated by each team member **	communication mechanism established and used regularly by school or community	programs developed to enhance receptive language, expressive language and problem solving	at least one in-person contact has been attempted between a team member and each parent	programs are developed based on needs as perceived by team members *
more than expected outcome	goals and direction of the program are written and known to school staff generally	two-way communication mechanism established and used sporadically by school and community **	individual needs are recognized and addressed within the context of the class program * *		parents identify their own needs; programs are developed by team to address needs *
most favourable outcome	goals and direction of the program are observed by school staff as a whole *	two-way communication mechanism established and used regularly by school and community *	each child in class has individual program to enhance receptive language, expressive language and problem solving *	an attempt has been made to establish a working relationship (6 in-person meetings) between the team and each parent * * *	parents identify their own needs; programs are developed in conjunction with parents to address needs *

TABLE 3

ALLOCATION OF PERCENTAGE OF
ACTUAL AND IDEAL TIME
SPENT IN PROJECT AND COMPARISON CLASSROOMS

I. ACTUAL TIME ALLOCATION

	PROJECT	CONTROL
Individual Interactions	27.85	26.64
Small Group Interactions	39.54	2-.55*
Whole Class Interactions	18.00	32.27*
Adult & Student Interactions	5.31	4.82
Adult Only Interactions	3.00	1.00*
Working Alone	4.77	7.82
Other	1.54	1.82
TOTAL	100.00	100.00

II. IDEAL TIME ALLOCATION

	PROJECT	CONTROL
Individual Interactions	29.32	27.18
Small Group Interactions	38.38	28.18
Whole Class Interactions	16.92	30.91*
Adult & Student Interactions	5.62	4.64
Adult Only Interactions	2.92	2.55
Working Alone	4.69	7.00
Other	1.54	.46
TOTAL	100.00	100.00

* Indicates Significant Differences

TABLE 4

FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN
BY PROJECT AND CONTROL STAFF
DURING VARIOUS TYPES OF INTERACTIONS

I. INDIVIDUAL INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

Project Staff	Frequency		Control Staff
Games	7	4	Games
*STORYTELLING	7	4	Fine motor skills
Discussion-conversation	6	4	Discussion-conversation
Arts-crafts	4	4	*SETTLE DISPUTES
Language-thinking skills	4	3	Arts-crafts
*READING	4	3	Language-thinking skills
Fine motor skills	3	3	*PRINTING-COUNTING
*ROLE-PLAYING	3	3	*CONFERENCE-TUTOR-EVALUATION

II. SMALL GROUP INTERACTIONS

Project Staff	Frequency		Control Staff
Games	7	9	Games
*STORYTELLING-WRITING	6	5	Arts-crafts
Arts-crafts	5	4	Fine motor skills
*PREPARING SNACK	5	4	*SETTLE DISPUTES
Group discussion	4	3	Group Discussion
Fine motor skills	4	3	Reading-listening
Reading-listening	3	3	*TESTING
*DRAMA	3		
*CENTRE-PLAY	3		
*COMPUTER	3		

NOTE: * Indicates Differences

Table 4 (continued)

III. WHOLE CLASS INTERACTIONS

Project Staff	Frequency		Control Staff
Music-song, dance	8	9	Storytelling-reading
Storytelling-reading	8	8	Games
Gross motor skills	5	6	Teach concepts, skills
Teach concepts, skills	5	4	Gross motor skills
*CLEAN-UP	4	4	Music-song, dance
*GROUP DISCUSSION	4	3	*SNACK TIME
Games	3		

IV. INTERACTIONS WITH ADULTS

Project Staff	Frequency		Control Staff
Brainstorm-share info.	10	5	Brainstorm-share info.
Provide-receive directions	4	3	Provide-receive directions
*MEETINGS-CONFERENCES	4	3	*COFFEE-LUNCH

V. WORKING ALONE

Project Staff	Frequency		Control Staff
Prepare class materials	8	7	Prepare class material
Record info., surveys	7	5	Record info., surveys
*PLAN GOALS & ACTIVITIES	3	5	CLEAN-UP
		4	*PREPARE SNACK
		4	*READ, STUDY, RESEARCH LIT.
		3	*OBSERVE, REVIEW STUDENT WORK

Note: * Indicates Differences

TABLE 5

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS FOR COHORT ONE

Family Status	Single Parent	Two Parents
Project Schools		
P1-A	12.8%	87.2%
P2-B	13.3%	86.7%
P3-C	46.5%	53.5%
Control Schools		
C1	23.4%	76.6%
C2	40.4%	59.6%

Employment Status	No Parent Working	One Parent Working	Two Parents Working
Project Schools			
P1-A	28.2%	30.8%	41.0%
P2-B	9.2%	54.5%	36.4%
P3-C	41.9%	30.2%	27.9%
Control Schools			
C1	22.3%	38.3%	39.4%
C2	33.3%	42.1%	24.6%

Languages Spoken at Home	No English	English Only	English Plus Other Languages
Project School			
P1-A	23.9%	37.0%	39.1%
P2-B	34.8%	37.0%	28.3%
P3-C	4.9%	68.3%	26.8%
Control Schools			
C1	21.3%	37.2%	41.5%
C2	5.3%	75.4%	19.3%

TABLE 6

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS FOR COHORT TWO

Family Status		Single Parent	Two Parents
Project Schools			
P1-A		26.5%	73.5%
P2-B		24.0%	76.0%
P3-C		45.2%	54.8%
Control Schools			
C1		26.9%	73.1%
C2		31.1%	68.9%
Employment Status	**No Parent Working**	**One Parent Working**	**Two Parents Working**
Project Schools			
P1-A	23.5%	32.4%	44.1%
P2-B	16.0%	56.0%	28.0%
P3-C	32.3%	48.4%	19.4%
Control Schools			
C1	28.0%	35.5%	36.6%
C2	31.1%	37.8%	31.1%
Languages Spoken at Home	**No English**	**English Only**	**English Only Other Languages**
Project Schools			
P1-A	50.0%	29.4%	20.6%
P2-B	44.0%	44.0%	12.0%
P3-C	0.0%	74.2%	25.8%
Control Schools			
C1	16.1%	46.2%	37.6%
C2	15.6%	71.1%	13.3%

TABLE 7

IMPACT OF E.S.Y. PROJECT ON SELF-ESTEEM
STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

COHORT 1

	Beta	R^2Change	F	P
A) BASE-Fall '85				
Step 1				
Age	.19	.08	5.24	.001
Employment Status	.16			
Family Status	.09			
Language Spoken at Home	.01			
Step 2				
Group	-.19	.04	10.49	.001
R^2 = .10; F = 6.45; df = 5,251; p < .000				
B) BASE-Spring '86				
Step 1				
BASE-fall '85	.67	.40	147.67	.000
Step 2				
Age	-.19	.05	4.94	.001
Family Status	.11			
Language Spoken at Home	-.04			
Employment Status	-.04			
Step 3				
Group	.13	.02	6.10	.014
R^2 = .45; F = 31.22; df = 6,217; p < .000				
C) BASE-Spring '87				
Step 1				
BASE-fall '85	.33	.29	30.96	.000
BASE-spring '86	.28			
Step 2				
Family Status	.08	.01	< 1	.931
Employment Status	-.06			
Age	-.04			
Language Spoken at Home	.00			
Step 3				
Group	.12	.01	2.76	.099
R^2 = .28; F = 9.28; df = 7,145; p < .000				

TABLE 8

IMPACT OF E.S.Y. PROJECT ON SELF-ESTEEM
STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

COHORT 2

	Beta	R^2 Change	F	P
A) BASE-fall '86				
Step 1				
Employment Status	.24	.13	7.55	.000
Language Spoken at Home	.16			
Age	.15			
Family Status	.02			
Step 2				
Group	-.17	.03	6.49	.012
R^2 = .13; F = 7.50; df = 5,107; p < .000				
B) BASE-spring '87				
Step 1				
BASE-fall '86	.46	.14	29.33	.000
Step 2				
Age	-.27	.14	8.34	.000
Language Spoken at Home	-.14			
Employment Status	.13			
Family Status	.03			
Step 3				
Group	.31	.09	22.98	.000
R^2 = .35; F = 16.58; df = 6,168; p < .000				

TABLE 9

IMPACT OF E.S.Y. PROJECT ON LANGUAGE
STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION

COHORT 2

	Beta	R^2 Change	F	P
A) BASE-fall '86				
Step 1				
Language Spoken at Home	.13	.05	2.56	.040
Employment Status	.13			
Age	.10			
Family Status	.00			
Step 2				
Group	-.10	.01	1.86	.175
R^2 = .03; F = 2.42; df = 5,192; p < .037				
B) TOLD-spring '87				
Step 1				
TOLD-fall	.72	.45	127.30	.000
Step 2				
Age	-.17	.04	2.99	.021
Family Status	-.08			
Employment Status	.06			
Language Spoken at Home	.03			
Step 3				
Group	.27	.07	22.88	.000
R^2 = .54; F = 31.57; df = 6,152; p < .000				